

BEETHOVEN.

BY RICHARD GRANT WHITE.

A GENIUS is expected by many, perhaps most of the world, to look and act very differently from the rest of mankind. Indeed, unless a man of great talent be remarkably large or small, or have such a physiognomy as was never before seen or heard of, or behave in such a manner as would make his company intolerable, unless he were that much talked of but rarely recognized thing—a genius—his hope of appreciation by the mass, in his own day and generation, would be, in most cases, vain. The eccentricities of genius, as they are called, are so looked upon as a necessary attendant, if not an essential part of it, as to be considered an unailing index of its existence. So, but with more reason, miners tell the presence of rich iron beds by the discoloration and fetid odor of the water springing from the soil.

That some men of genius have been peculiar in person and eccentric in manner, there is no doubt; but there is as little doubt that their peculiarities and eccentricities have been greatly exaggerated by their Boswells, and again as little, that of men of genius, there have been comparatively few, very few, distinguished for eccentricity or personal peculiarity. Personal beauty of a high order is the only external characteristic which appears to belong to them as a class. The general belief on the subject seems naturally accounted for by the fact, that the peculiar habits of men of mark are as apt "*monstrari digito*" as their persons, and that which would be unheeded or frowned down in others, is sought out and tolerated, if not admired, in them. Most men paint for themselves an ideal head of the great creative minds with whose works they are familiar, and, doing so in conformity with the notions of which we have just spoken, most are disappointed on meeting with the portraits of those whom they have thus depicted to themselves.

There has probably never lived a more marked exception to these observations—one who, in his mode, life and personal appearance, more completely satisfied the general requirements as to men of genius—than Ludwig von Beethoven, the deaf composer of Bonn. Short in stature;

wild and melancholy in appearance; strange and careless in dress; painfully awkward in his movements; eccentric in all his habits of life; at times childishly simple, at others absurdly assuming in manner; distrustful of kindness, but intolerant of neglect; himself revering nothing, yet claiming all deference to himself; believing the enemies whom he despised, when they maligned the friends whom he respected; living in want and pleading penury when possessed of the means of comfort; affecting and seeming at times to despise rank and wealth, and yet eagerly seeking the notice of the one, and possession of the other; it seems only necessary that he should be a musician, and deaf, to fill up the measure of strangeness and inconsistency in his character. No one, who has understood and properly felt his music, can be for a moment dissatisfied with his portrait. The massy forehead and ponderous brow, the flood of wild, disheveled hair, the gloomy eye, gazing intensely into vacancy, and the strongly marked mouth, where determination and scorn, wit and melancholy, seem striving for the mastery, are fair exponents of the man and his works.

Schindler, his incompetent biographer, says of him, that he possessed too much genuine religious feeling to believe that Nature had created him to be a model for future ages, as many would have persuaded him; speaks of him as living in another world, though existing in this; compares him to a child, to whom every external influence gives a new impulse, and who turns a willing ear to flattery, because incapable of estimating the motive of the flatterer. "Beethoven," says he, "well knew and always respected the motto, *Palmas qui meruit ferat*. His upright, impartial mind led him to bestow the most unequivocal approbation on foreign talent. He always bore in mind that a Mozart had preceded him, and that another might follow him. He ever cherished high expectations of the future, for he fervently believed in the omnipotence of the Creator, and the inexhaustibility of Nature." And then breaking out into the superlative of eulogy, he says: "Oh! how great was Beethoven as a man!

Whoever learned to know him on that side, and was capable of comprehending and judging, not only of his mighty genius, but also of his noble heart, will not fail to place the moral man, if not above the great composer, at least on the same level with him."

A very strange appreciation of Beethoven's character this, even taking the very partial and prejudiced biography which Schindler himself has produced, as giving the true points of that character. Dazzled by the halo of glory with which he justly circles the head of the composer, his biographer is blind to the distorted features of the man, drawn by his own unconscious and unwilling hand.

In considering the compositions of any mighty master, if we meet that which is dissonant to our ears and incomprehensible to our minds, we may bow in submission to the greatness of his genius, believing the fault in ourselves, and feeling that which is chaotic confusion to us, is clear and regular to him. For not all, even of the cultivated, have that natural organization which necessitates the susceptibility requisite to the perfect appreciation of the most elevated creations of art. And if it be true that, "in art the great is not for all," still more is it true that "all are not for the great." For, though in the loftiest creations of the greatest minds, there is a simplicity which makes them felt, even if not comprehended, by the lowliest minds; and though this very simplicity is one strong proof of their greatness, still there are some of their productions which are only for the cultivated and refined—some oracles uttered in a tongue known only to the initiated, because only to the initiated are they addressed; and it may be, some uttered only for their fellow-prophets, and comprehensible only by them. This is eminently the case with the works of Beethoven. He is not always lucid, and though we should recollect that he is great, not by reason of, but rather in spite of, his occasional want of clearness, yet there is no composer, save perhaps Handel, who requires to be read and heard with such implicit faith, and such distrust of self. But though the works of a great author may be regarded in this all-trustful light, his life cannot claim the same immunity; still less should his vices or his failings be considered as necessary adjuncts to his genius. The possession of genius adds to, not diminishes, the accountability of its possessor to God

and man, and the biographer who gilds the vices of his subject by the glory of his works, is guilty as false himself to the trust he has received, and as an encourager of those who follow him to make their talent an excuse to themselves for the sins whose guilt it really deepens.

From these remarks it must by no means be gathered that Beethoven was a man of vicious life. Far from it. Indeed, had he been guilty of great crimes, urged on thereto by strong passions; had he been the wayward thing which genius sometimes is, his failings could have been passed by in that charity which beareth all things, believeth all things, and hopeth all things. But this was not the case. It is from the tone of his whole life and character, that we enter our objection to the eulogy of his biographer. No; Beethoven was a mighty genius, but not a noble heart; he was a great composer, but not a great man; for his mind lacked integrity, and his heart charity. Self was the inspiration of the one, and the idol of the other. Shut out during the whole of his life from that rude contact with the world, which destroys the freshness, the purity, and the confidence of youth, but which it is one of the highest attributes of genius to preserve through life in unfading integrity, he seems to have been always distrustful of those around him, always selfish, always egotistical, and never to have had the least consideration for the feelings of others.

Beethoven was born at Bonn, in the year 1770, and passed his life in that city and in Vienna, where he composed all his great works, and where he died. His musical education he received from Haydn, Mozart, Albrechtsberger and Salieri. That is, he was the pupil of each one of these for some time, for he was too self-willed to learn anything of anybody, and this trait of his character was evident, not only in music, but in all the affairs of life. He yielded nothing, either upon persuasion, reason or compulsion. His whole life as an artist and a man seems to have been the assertion of his own individuality, the enforcement of his own will and caprice. Wegeler, who knew Haydn, Albrechtsberger and Mozart, remarks that "each said Beethoven had always been so obstinate and self-willed, that his own hard experience often had to teach him those things, the study of which he would not hear of;" and Beethoven himself said—when Haydn, proud

of his ungrateful pupil, wished him to write on the titles of his early works, "pupil of Haydn,"—that although he received some instructions from Haydn, yet he had never learnt anything of him. This is easily to be believed, for two minds more incongruous could scarcely have been found, than the spiritual, pure, gentle, placid, and well-regulated Haydn, and the wild, ungovernable, turgid Beethoven. Their habits of life and of composition were as different as their mental organization, and were in perfect consonance with their characters. Haydn never wrote save when neatly dressed, and having on his hand a diamond ring given him by his princely patron, and always in one apartment, which was kept in order, and had a delightful exposure. His manuscript, too, was scrupulously neat, and very legible; and as his patron wished every day a new composition for the *bariton* from him, he always produced it. Beethoven, no matter what were his engagements, never composed, save when he pleased, and his pleasure in the matter was most fitful; his manuscript was with difficulty read, even by those most familiar with it, the notes being shapeless things, dashed into the lines in apparent fury and recklessness. Life was too short, he said, to paint notes; yet Haydn wrote much more than he did. His room, Seyfried thus describes:—"The most exquisite confusion reigned in his house; books and music were scattered in all directions; here the residue of a cold luncheon, there some full, some half-emptied bottles; on the desk the hasty sketch of a new quartette; in another corner the remains of breakfast; on the piano forte the scribbled hints for a noble Symphony, yet little more than in embryo; hard by a proof sheet, waiting to be returned; letters from friends, and on business, spread all over the floor; between the windows a goodly Stracchino cheese, and on one side of it ample vestiges of a genuine Verona salai; and, notwithstanding this confusion, he constantly eulogised, with Ciceronian eloquence, his own neatness and love of order! When, however, for whole hours, days, and often weeks, something mislaid was looked for, and all search had proved fruitless, then he changed his tone, and bitterly complained that everything was done to annoy him." If we add to this that he was constantly, and for the most trivial causes, or rather whims, changing his lodgings, we shall obtain some idea of the confusion in

which he lived, and which showed a mind diametrically opposed to that of Haydn. One cause of his remark that he never learnt anything of Haydn, and also of his continual sneers at him and his music, may be found in the following anecdote, which shows the suspicion which marked his character even in early life. His three trios, Op. 1., were to be brought forward at one of Prince Lichnowsky's *soirées*, to which all distinguished musicians and amateurs had been invited, Haydn, of course, among them, his judgment being anxiously and deferentially expected. The Trios created great sensation, and Haydn himself praised them to Beethoven, but advised him not to publish the third, in C Minor. He, thinking this the best, instead of supposing that he might be in fault, or that Haydn might have been startled by the novel style of the composition, immediately thought that Haydn wished to suppress it from envy and jealousy, and always after bore a grudge against him. Beethoven, however, was right in his judgment; it was the best Trio. He received but little instruction from Mozart, who, however, predicted his future greatness.

This suspicion, and want of confidence in those around, was continually causing unhappiness to all of the few whom he allowed to come in contact with him. On the slightest provocation, or without any, he would subject those to whom he was indebted for the greatest kindness, not only to the most unjust and degrading suspicions, but to the harshest and coarsest language, and afterward, when they could be of service to him again, make mean apologies, and eagerly avail himself of their good offices. That surest index and most admirable attribute of a delicate mind and benevolent heart, consideration for the feelings of others, seemed utterly unknown to him. And yet it was not so from a want of proper instinct in the matter, for none sooner than himself felt or resented a wound to his self-love. The instinct was, with many others of like nature, crushed beneath his idol, Self, the Juggernaut of his own happiness as well as of the comfort of those around him.

Once, on a failure of one of his concerts, he suspected his tried friend Schindler of having cheated him, and soon after, at a dinner which he gave to a few friends, he publicly and angrily accused him of the fraud. The two directors of his concert who were present, in vain showed to

him that as the receipts had passed through the hands of the two cashiers of the theatre, and their accounts exactly corresponded, a fraud was impossible, he as usual would not listen to reason, and refused to retract his charge. And yet this Schindler, who was his biographer, and who relates this story, and also that the friend of his youth, Hofrath von Brenning, was alienated from him by a *similar reflection* on his honor, and that Beethoven was only brought back to him by certain melancholy events, which caused him to *stand in need of his assistance*; and also that an accusation of *similar nature*, occasioned a coolness of twelve years' standing between Beethoven and his old friend Dr. Malfatti; and who says, "This may serve to show what it was to be Beethoven's friend, and to keep on good terms with him only a single year—how much friendship, how many sacrifices, what an entire self denial, did it not require to submit to be daily exposed to the most malicious calumnies, and even to the most dishonorable accusations!"—this man speaks of "his noble heart," and of placing the "moral man above the composer." Strange perversity! that will not see that suspicion, selfishness, and disregard of the happiness of others, is inconsistent with nobility of soul. Dog-like attachment! that will caress and defend the hand which neglects and abuses.

Frederika Bremer said well, that "one of the noblest attributes of the soul is an enlightened credulity." It is the presence of that spirit in all that he wrote which is one of the elements of Shakspeare's greatness. It was his love for, and faith in, his fellows which infused that touching tenderness in Mozart's music which makes him loved, and it was the want of this noble attribute alone which prevented Beethoven from being the greatest of composers.

In perfect keeping with the traits just noticed was the free course he gave to his tongue in severe remarks on all around him. His biographer says—"He gave expression to his feelings without any reserve; and the propriety of repressing offensive remarks was a thing that never entered his thoughts;"—and this is mentioned as a proof of his candor, and consequently of his nobleness of mind.

Irritable to excess, Beethoven put no greater restraint upon his anger than his sarcasm. No matter who offended him, his wrath was instantly and forcibly

visited upon the offender. Sex, age, long friendship, nor relationship caused any variation in the quality or quantity of his revenge. Of his continual quarrels with his brother, one ended in blows, and the following anecdotes, ludicrous in themselves, show the undignified and violent manner in which his petty anger vented itself upon two menials, and one of them an old and kind-hearted woman. They are related by Ries and Seyfried.

"One day at the 'Swan,' the waiter brought him the wrong dish. Beethoven had no sooner uttered a few words of reproof (to which the other retorted in no very polite manner), than he took the dish, amply filled with the gravy of the stewed beef it contained, and threw it at the waiter's head. Those who know the dexterity of the Viennese waiters in carrying, at one and the same time, numberless plates full of different viands, will conceive the distress of the poor man, who could not move his arms, while the gravy trickled down his face. Both he and Beethoven swore and shouted, whilst all the parties assembled roared with laughter. At last Beethoven himself joined the chorus, on looking at the waiter, who was licking in with his tongue the stream of gravy which, much as he fought against, hindered him from uttering any more invectives; the evolutions of his tongue causing the most absurd grimaces."

"Among his favorite dishes was bread soup, made in the manner of pap, in which he indulged every Thursday. To compose this, ten eggs were set before him, which he tried before mixing with the other ingredients; and if it unfortunately happened that any of them were musty, a grand scene ensued; the offending cook was summoned to the presence by a tremendous ejaculation. She, however, well knowing what might occur, took care cautiously to stand on the threshold of the door, prepared to make a precipitate retreat; but the moment she made her appearance the attack commenced, and the broken eggs, like bombs from well directed batteries, flew about her ears, their yellow and white contents covering her with viscous streams."

Veneration he had none, and his pride was satanic. He affected to despise all distinctions of birth, rank and place, and yet throughout his whole life he showed the most eager desire for them. His democracy was of the sort which brought all down to him, but raised none to him.

A suit having arisen between himself and his sister-in-law, it was brought before a court of nobles, the "von" in his name being supposed to be German, and therefore indicative of noble birth. But it being suggested that it might be Dutch and therefore conferring no distinction, the court asked him for proofs of his nobility. "Here," answered he, striking his forehead and his breast. The court, not acknowledging this somewhat self-sufficient answer as proper proof of what they desired to know, sent the cause to an inferior court; at which Beethoven was in a towering passion, considering it an insult. But if all be equal, save through their own personal merits, as he claimed, then he received no insult; and if all be not equal, then he did receive justice.

Of a similar nature was his conduct when, walking one day with Goethe, they met the royal train. Goethe, in respect to the chief magistrate of the nation, took off his hat, but Beethoven crushed his down more firmly on his head, and stalking on in anger, rated Goethe roundly for his civility. Ries relates of him that being presented by Frederick William II. with a gold snuff-box filled with louis-d'ors, "he used to relate with much complacency, that it was no common box, but such as is given to ambassadors." And also that at a musical *soirée* given by one of the nobility of Vienna, "at supper there was a table laid for the Prince and the highest nobility alone, and no cover for Beethoven. He took fire, uttered some coarse expressions and left the house. A few days later Prince Louis gave a dinner party, to which the old Countess who had given the *soirée* was invited. On sitting down, places were assigned to the Countess on one, to Beethoven on the other side of the Prince, a distinction which he always talked of with great pleasure." The conduct of the Prince must appear to all far more amiable as well as justly considerate of the merits of the guests, than that of the Countess; but there is a remarkable, though by no means strange, inconsistency between Beethoven's action in the one case and the other, and his avowed sentiments. The same pride and arrogance caused him, when his brother, after having become possessed of a patrimony, signed a letter "Johann von Beethoven, Land-owner,"—a usual thing in Germany,—to sneer at it, and sign his

answer, "Ludwig von Beethoven, Brain-owner."

All his friends unite in saying that he was constantly in love. His first love was M^{lle} Jeanette d'Honrath, of Cologne, of his others no record has been kept. All unite in saying that his affections were always placed in the higher ranks. Perhaps this was the reason that he never married. But passionate as must have been the love of the composer of *Adelaide*, no woman could have lived, save in misery, with Beethoven.

His religious creed, though he was born and educated in the Roman Church, was a vague sort of Deism, and was comprised in two inscriptions from the temple of Isis. These he had copied with his own hand, and they, for many years, lay constantly before him on' his writing-table. They were:—

I. "I AM THAT WHICH IS—I AM ALL THAT IS, ALL THAT WAS, AND ALL THAT SHALL BE. NO MORTAL HATH MY VEIL UPLIFTED."

II. "HE IS ONE, SELF-EXISTENT, AND TO THAT ONE ALL THINGS OWE THEIR EXISTENCE."

These he regarded, says his biographer, as an epitome of the loftiest and purest religion. Their cold unfluencing doctrine, if doctrine they can be said to have, seems about as near an approach to religion as a mind like Beethoven's could make. Of his truly religious life, of which his biographer speaks, no trace appears, save that he received the sacrament of extreme unction when on his death-bed. Indeed, he whose religious feeling was so small, that it required the constant stimulus afforded by the sight of so cold and speculative a creed as the one which he had always before him, could not with reason be expected to have that religious feeling give any tone to his life. And yet it is not at all surprising that he adopted no other belief. There is a mystery in the seeming simplicity of that which he avowed, a vagueness which leaves so much for the imagination to fill in many ways, as it is affected by the feelings, changing as they do with time and circumstances, and an absence of anything which appeals to aught but reason for its reception, or which requires any humility in the recipient, which make it eminently fitted for the belief of a man without faith—and such was Beethoven.

His compositions, when they first ap-

peared, startled the musical world from its propriety. All felt their power, but yet they were called "the queerest stuff imaginable,"—"contrary to all rule." Strange, indeed, they were. Nothing like them had ever been heard or imagined before, but their heresies against art were on that very account magnified. Most of his violations were rather of the imposed formulas, than of essential spirit of art; though some were indeed radical, and though excusable in him are not imitable with impunity by others. These irregularities he never allowed to be questioned—his answers to such inquiries about his works being usually, "It is better thus." But Ries, his pupil, spoke once to him of two consecutive fifths in one of his early quartetts, which, contrary to all previous experience, produced a harmonious effect. Beethoven for some time could not believe that they were fifths. But when Ries had proved himself right, by writing down the passage, Beethoven's reply was, "Well, and who forbids them?" In his astonishment at the question Ries did not answer, and Beethoven repeated the question several times. At length Ries replied, "Why it is one of the very first rules." Still Beethoven repeated his question, to which Ries answered, "Marpurg, Kirnberger, Fuchs—all theorists." "Well, then, I permit them," was the reply. The radicalism and assumption of this answer will be more completely comprehended by readers generally, when they know that consecutive fifths are as inadmissible in music as consecutive negatives or superlatives in English; and that it is as much a violation of musical grammar to have one perfect fifth follow another, in similar motion, save in certain situations, as it is a violation of English grammar to say "not none," or "most best." It was one thing for Beethoven to say, that in this case he felt justified in using them, and quite another for him to say that they were admissible in classic writing. As might have been expected, Beethoven's example has been followed by many who, of course, have not his genius as their excuse; and it is worthy of notice, that this is the only theoretical remark of Beethoven's of which we have any record.

But it was more particularly in the forms of his thought, and the manner in which he worked out his ideas, that he violated the rules observed by preceding

composers. This the very nature of his inspirations required. Had they been developed in another way, they would not have been Beethoven's. His works might then have been pronounced unexceptionable as to model, but they would have failed to stir those depths of feeling untouched save by him; the unutterable emotions which he alone has awakened would have yet been dormant; and, what was more to him, his own soul would have had no utterance. Beethoven might as well have attempted to graduate the eruptions of Vesuvius as to bind the expression of his own emotions in the forms given him by other minds.

Fashion is, in its day and among its votaries, supreme in music as in everything else, and it has lately been the fashion to talk with an affectation of learned enthusiasm upon Beethoven, but to listen to Donizetti. As those will speak with rapture of Shakspeare who hardly know the difference between Hamlet and Pericles, Prince of Tyre, so it has been fashionable to speak of Beethoven's "depth of harmony" among the large class who know nothing of him but a few waltzes, some of which, though bearing his name, are decidedly not his. Indeed, except among the professors of music, and the very small number of well-educated amateurs, little or nothing of his works has been known among us till within the last few years. But since the production of *Fidelio* at the Park Theatre, the Mount of Olives by the New York Sacred Music Society, the concerts of the German Society, and more particularly since the establishment of the Philharmonic Society, we have really begun to know something of the wonderful mind of this man.

Fidelio, though not equal as a composition to the king of operas, Don Giovanni, surpasses it in the intensity of the expression of the passions it portrays. The difference in the character of the *libretti* is the chief cause of this. Beethoven has expressed with marvelous power, the tenderness, the agony, the despair and the happiness which the situations of the opera awaken. From Leonora's first appearance, as she is left in Rocco's room to pour out unheard and in solitude the agony of her soul, to the time when she rests in Florestano's arms, the savior of her husband and the honored of her sovereign, how full is every note she utters of deep-felt, yearning af-

fection. How awfully descriptive is the instrumental music while Florestano lies in exhausting slumber in the dungeon. We hear, but do not listen, to the groaning of the basses, the wailing of the violins, and moaning of the horns, for Beethoven has made the instruments not suggestive of themselves, but a part of the scene which lies before us. And when the heart is depressed even to gloom and despondency, by the sadness which enters at eye and ear, the emaciated prisoner wakes. At first, his notes are feeble and unconnected, but excited by the madness of his own imaginings, he pours out his terror and his love in such frenzied tones, that the heart beats fitfully, and breathing is a care, till he drops exhausted on his stony couch. And when the tyrant is baffled, and husband and wife stand once more united amid the happy and wondering crowd, how fiercely joyous is the final chorus. The exulting theme bursts now from one, now from another; the instruments are not mere accompaniments, nor adjuncts, but each seems to have a voice, and to pour its enlivening and boisterous joy as if involuntarily. The crowd still the expression of their own happiness to hear that of the reunited husband and wife, whose glad tones now rise above the rest, so full of that calm, gushing-forth of tenderness from the heart, which comes only from those who are supremely happy, that we think they are about to die away into eloquent stillness; but they are again caught up by, and mingled with, a new burst from chorus and orchestra, which is the last and fullest expression of exulting joy.

The Mount of Olives is matchless as an expression of majestic wo, but has not the chaste gravity which the oratorio demands. The last chorus, "Hallelujah to the Father," is a noble piece of choral writing, and the gem of the composition, but challenges a depreciating comparison with the Hallelujah Chorus of the Messiah.

But it is in his symphonies that most become acquainted with Beethoven's music. His chamber music is heard but among the professors and the very small class of amateurs before alluded to, and his masses nowhere on this side of the Atlantic, and at rare times and places in Europe. Indeed he wrote but two, one in C and one in D; though the score of another in C Minor, claiming to be his, has been published, but on doubtful authority.

The first of these is sublime, and the second may be, but it is almost unsingable and altogether incomprehensible. His symphonies which are the most general, are also the best means of becoming acquainted with his style, for these are the channels of his greatest thoughts, which here, preserving the purity and sweetness of their first spring, and swelled by knowledge, experience and self-reliance, flow on in unequalled depth and majesty. In the fullness of his power just at the time when the orchestra had reached its richest combination of instruments, he found in it a weapon fit for his gigantic grasp, a voice capable of expressing his big emotions. He writes a Pastoral Symphony, a subject which pale, interesting young gentlemen and sentimental young ladies connect with a one-keyed flute, and walks into the fields to write upon scraps of paper, ideas which he will utter through the voices of an army of instruments. And how beautifully does he cause them to tell their tale, making all from flute to double bass "babble of green fields." How sunny and refreshing are the melodies, how inspiring the modulations; a blind man could hardly desire a better summer. He brings before us a bright summer day: and the rustling winds, and clear, deep shadows of the woods induce calm reverie and dreamy delight. He takes us to the side of a rivulet, and a gentle murmuring melody runs through the orchestra, till the ear is almost sated with its dreamy tones in "linked sweetness long drawn out." The water ripples past waving grass and yellow corn, the bee hums by, the breeze whispers in our ear, and the nightingale, the cuckoo and the quail call from the rustling trees. He shows us the peasants dancing on the green; we can see their vigorous steps and hear the clatter of their wooden shoes; the festivity becomes boisterous, the music, so thoroughly rustic and exciting in its character, accelerates in time till it seems as if both weary musicians and panting dancers must give out, when all are driven to shelter by the terrific thunder-storm. The distant muttering of the thunder and moaning of the wind, the heavy flash of the first huge drops of rain, the sudden burst of the hurricane, the vivid lightning flash, the bellowing thunder, and the sheets of water which sweep across the fields, are brought before the mind's eye in all their terrific reality. The storm passes off, the thun-

der is heard again in the distance—but now in exhausted, not threatening tones—the wind dies away in lulling cadence, and then arises the Shepherd's Song of Gratitude, which seems the voice of nature rejoicing in its freshened beauty, and which closes most fittingly, this, the greatest piece of descriptive music in existence.

The Symphonies in E flat, (the *Eroica*) and A major, are equal exhibitions of power but in different views. The latter, written in honor of Napoleon, and cast indignantly aside, when nearly finished, upon the composer's hearing that his hero had assumed the crown, contains two of the greatest movements he ever wrote. The first *Allegro* is fearful in its majesty and mystery, and its expression of invincible determination, and the *Adagio* is unequaled as an expression of mighty and overwhelming woe: at the close of this movement Beethoven has brought from the orchestra sobs, strangely and touchingly human.

But of all his works, the greatest, that which is throughout most characteristic of its author, is the Symphony in C Minor. There is not a phrase in it which could have been written by any other composer; and it would be difficult, almost impossible, for any other after having heard this composition to write another in the same vein. And this, not because of the elaborateness of the work, for they are of marvelous and massive simplicity, being, with the exception of the opening air of the *Andante* and *fugue* of the *Trio*, constructed on the notes of the common chord; but the soul of the work is so completely of Beethoven's own creation, that it is not even all of those who can comprehend it who can rightly feel its meaning. It does not admit of description like the *Pastorale*, not being descriptive itself. Beethoven being asked what he meant by the first notes, said, "It is thus that Fate knocks at the door;" and this is all the clue we have to the design of this stupendous work, which, when it was first performed by the Philharmonic Society of London, was not comprehended until after several trials, so forbidding and unmeaning did the first movement seem. The *Andante* of this work enjoys the reputation of being the greatest movement of the greatest symphony ever written.

His ninth Symphony, which has lately been performed by the Philharmonic Society, is, with some others of his later

works—the second mass particularly—utterly incomprehensible to the most accomplished musicians and critics, save in a few isolated portions. Some have said, that the mysteries of these compositions are left for coming years to unravel; but this, even with all deference which should be shown to great genius, may be reasonably doubted. Beethoven's style is now perfectly understood, and the construction of these works has been thoroughly studied and comprehended, and still they are found to be incoherent rather than incomprehensible, to be vague rather than mysterious. It is more than probable, that in his long continued deafness, and his broken constitution, we are to find the causes of these stupendous anomalies in music.

His style of composition has caused some to say that his Sonatas and Symphonies are operas in disguise. The remark is plausible, but is yet untrue; for the character of Beethoven's mind was not at all dramatic. Self, as has been before remarked, was his inspiration. His own feelings, his own loves, his own sorrows, his own gigantic pride and consciousness of power, found expression in his music. When stimulated by the creations of others, as he frequently was by the works of Shakspeare, Scott, Goethe and Schiller, it was not to their imaginings that his mind gave another form and expression, but to some new feeling which had been awakened by them in him. Utterance, mere utterance, whether heeded or not, seems to be all that he sought. To stamp himself upon all that he produced, and to make all the world of musical art bow before him, seemed to be his only endeavor. What wonder, then, that Napoleon was his hero.

His restlessness and discontent are plainly visible in most of his works, particularly in the greatest of them. The Titanic heavings of an imprisoned but mighty soul, which would pile Pelion on Ossa, in a vain attempt to reach that which is unattainable, and which is sought only because it is unattainable, the feverish thirst of a diseased mind, which is but increased by that it craves, and a sullen, gloomy melancholy, which lacks but fixedness to become despair, are shadowed forth with fearful effect in some of his great works. He has been compared to Handel. True, he is of the same class as Handel, but by no means akin to him. Grandeur characterizes the works of both; but Handel's have the

grandeur of naked and finished simplicity, Beethoven's that of unpolished magnificence. Both are powerful; but with Handel, power is a means, with Beethoven an end. Both are imposing; but the one from his unconscious majesty, the other from his conscious might. In depicting the softer emotions, Handel is tender and earnest, Beethoven fanciful and impassioned. His love is ungovernable and distracting, his joy fierce and fitful. He is rarely placid, and never tender. Sadness he has not; but instead, a gloomy melancholy which pervades most of his writings, and appears in all. Humor he also lacks, in common with most of his countrymen, but his perception and love of the grotesque is great and eminently Teutonic. In all that he wrote, he is vast, indefinite, and thoughtful. He never seems done with his theme, or rather it never seems done with him, for it possesses him, and not he it. It carries him on and on with irresistible sweep, and when he bursts impetuously away from it, and seems completely occupied with another idea, it recurs with a suddenness which is startling. And even in the final crash of the orchestra, when the movement seems about instantly to close, and the cadence is expected, the theme breaks out again, and it is only by an irresistible dash into a *prestissimo*, that he seems able to bring the movement to an end. This is particularly the case with the themes of the quick movements of his symphonies, which are always admirably fitted by their loftiness and power for such a mode of treatment. He introduced a new movement into symphony, quartette and sonata writing—the *Scherzo*—invented by himself. The *Minuetto*, for which he substituted this, had too much voluptuous grace in it to be a suitable form for his ideas; he required something which would carry heavier weight, and his *Scherzo* movements belie their name; for they cannot be called playful, though mirthful they sometimes are. They have a gigantic vivacity, a wild impetuosity, bursting forth in grotesque and fanciful forms, and then subsiding into gloom equally fitful and unrestrained.

In these movements, he seems to delight in tossing about huge masses of sound, in rapid and intricate evolutions, which are like the skipping of a playful Polyphemus; and mixed with these stupendous fantasies are strains of ravishing sweetness, and sometimes of touching

grief. They contain his most characteristic, and many of his first ideas. His slow movements are generally grave, deep and sombre, and yet, with his characteristic variability, have flashes of the fanciful, the grotesque, and the joyful. His allegros have not the brilliant purity and steady march of Mozart's; but are richly turgid, and rush on with the awful and overwhelming force of a swollen torrent. His ponderous pen has left its heavy strokes upon all his writings. The same thoughtful, massive style, is apparent in his string quartettes, and his piano forte music, as in his symphonies and masses. Contrary to the ideas entertained by many, it is in his ideas themselves that we must seek his power, not in the number of instruments which he used to embody them. Indeed, he himself said that his music did not require large bands, sixty performers being all that he desired, and this is found to give about enough stringed instruments to balance a full wind band. His declaration that, if independent as to money matters, he would write nothing but symphonies and masses, and perhaps quartettes, shows the appreciation he had of his own genius; but the world may rejoice in obtaining his minor works, all of which, as has been before remarked, bear the marks of his peculiar genius. Even his little Spirit Waltz, for the piano forte, is full of unearthliness amid all its ravishing sweetness. We can see the deaf musician sitting at his instrument, with his wild, mysterious eyes gazing into the space which he had peopled with Shapes, which are all the more fearful that they are partly human; female figures, with eyes gleaming with unholy light, and forms and faces of fearful, unearthly beauty; male figures, too manlike to be Satyrs, and too fiendish to be men—these, mated with strange, sexless Shapes, all grotesque, fantastic and hellish, mingle, and noiselessly and slowly advance in the mysterious waltz; now they are close at hand, and go floating by, fascinating with the very unearthliness which makes them so repulsive, and the eager eye follows them as they sail off again and are lost in the distance. It is, perhaps, worthy of remark, that this strangely beautiful composition is frequently spoiled by being played too fast—a common fault in the performance of Beethoven's music, and one of which he complained.

Beethoven died of dropsy, on the 26th

of March, 1827, and was buried in the grave-yard at Währing. His funeral was attended by, at least, twenty thousand persons; his body was borne by the eight principal singers of Vienna, and attended by thirty-six torch-bearers, consisting of poets, authors, composers and musicians. The music which accompanied the procession, was an *Equale*—written by himself—for four trombones, to which was sung the *Miserere*. Hummel dropped three laurel wreaths upon his coffin, and the mourners, waiting till the

grave was covered, left it in silence just as the twilight fell upon them. During the past year, a statue was raised to him in his native city, the ceremonies lasting three days, and being attended by kings and princes, who honored themselves in their strife to do honor to the memory of the great composer.

Beethoven may be regarded as the great epic Poet of Music, and his place is with Handel, Haydn and Mozart, but not above them as some have claimed.

This article is given in direct contradiction

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